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SUBJECT: LRA Talks Resume, New Position Papers Requested

Ref: Khartoum 01942

¶1. (SBU) After taking a three-day break, talks between Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) resumed on August 18. During the break, taken to mourn fallen LRA Commander Raska Lukwiya, Chief Mediator Riek Machar asked both parties to return with new position papers that had room for compromise. According to an observer from UN OCHA, a delegation from Northern Uganda comprised of Acholi, religious, and civil leaders, as well as members of the Ugandan parliament, used the recess to work with the LRA delegation and encourage them to develop more realistic demands that better reflect the desires of the Northern Ugandan people. These leaders are reportedly worried that the largely diaspora negotiating team has only a limited understanding of the situation on the ground.

¶2. (SBU) Like the LRA negotiating team, the Northern Ugandan leaders appear to be keen on using these talks to address the grievances of all Northern Ugandans, even if that is not LRA leader Joseph Kony's priority. The UN OCHA observer commented that if these negotiations were being done in the bush directly with Kony, it would "be over in two weeks." However, Kony would only negotiate for his own safety and that of his commanders, and the root causes of the conflict would not be addressed.

¶3. (SBU) The UN OCHA observer reiterated that support from the international community would be necessary to guarantee any agreement, and that the negotiations would go faster with international support. He was concerned that most capitals were making their decisions based on the 2004 negotiations led by Ugandan representative Betty Bigombe, while not recognizing that the situation for the LRA has completely changed. Acting Consul General repeated that the United States has no plans to become involved in the talks and that the USG will continue to be active in the contact group discussions in New York.

HUME